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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 006953

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ECON](#) [KPAL](#) [EG](#) [IZ](#) [IS](#) [ICRC](#) [MEPN](#)

SUBJECT: CAIRO ARAB LEAGUE FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING:  
EGYPT AND ARAB LEAGUE RESPONSES

REF: STATE 163365 (NOTAL)

Classified by Ambassador Francis Ricciardone for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

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Summary  
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1. (C) During an introductory meeting September 6, the Ambassador reviewed with Arab League Secretary General Amre Moussa reftel points ahead of an Arab League foreign ministers meeting scheduled for September 8 in Cairo. The Ambassador sought Moussa's and the League's support on Iraq's political transition, public condemnation of terrorism, progress on the Israeli-Palestinian issues, Syria-Lebanon (septel), and regional reform. Moussa began by calling for an enhanced US-Arab dialogue to bridge what he called a "growing divide". On Iraq, Moussa said he was ready to make positive statements on Iraq's constitution once he saw a final draft, noting that the issue of language on Iraq's "Arab identity" had been resolved. On UN terror language, Moussa said he was pushing Arab leaders to agree to language that categorically condemned attacks on civilians but was facing some resistance. On the Magen David Adom issue, Moussa said that without clarity on what Israel would do with its West Bank settlements and its security barrier, the Arabs were simply not prepared to offer Tel Aviv a "reward" for leaving Gaza. Regarding a planned Arab-Arab American forum in Houston, Moussa said the League may postpone the gathering in deference to Hurricane Katrina relief efforts in that city. The DCM also delivered reftel demarche to MFA Cabinet Chief of Staff Wafa'a Bassim September 6. End summary.

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Arab League Secretary General Calls for Enhanced Dialogue  
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2. (C) During an introductory call on Arab League Secretary General Amre Moussa September 6, the Ambassador delivered reftel demarche ahead of a September 8 League meeting of foreign ministers in Cairo. Moussa opened the meeting by calling for an expanded and deepened bilateral dialogue between the League and the USG on key issues affecting the region, citing Iraq and the Arab-Israeli conflict as examples. Moussa acknowledged his admiration for America's positive contributions to Egypt's development efforts and suggested that most Egyptians were unaware of the tremendous assistance delivered by the U.S. Recent damage to America's public image in the region, he suggested, might be reversible via improved coordination and dialogue with regional leaders to deal with regional challenges. Moussa cited Washington's Broader Middle East and North Africa initiative as an example of a project he felt had not succeeded due to a lack of local participation in its inception. Moussa further warned that public opinion in the Middle East should not be ignored. "We recognize the U.S. as the world's only superpower, but we cannot simply say 'yes, sir' and follow blindly behind." There must be some give-and-take, he added.

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Supporting Iraq's Political Process  
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3. (C) Responding to the Ambassador's request for Arab League support for Iraq's political development, Moussa said he had warned Iraqi President Talabani in April that he would publicly criticize problematic language in the TAL (Transitional Administrative Law) over Iraq's "Arab identity" if it was included in the draft constitution. Nevertheless, after numerous calls and dialogue with key Iraqi political figures, the issue was successfully resolved. Moussa was waiting to see a final, public draft of the constitution before making public remarks. If the revised language on Iraq's Arab identity is in the document, he said, he would make positive public statements in support of Iraq's political process. This episode, Moussa added, was an example of where the U.S., Iraq, and the Arab League could have consulted privately in order to avoid dispute.

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Terror Language for the UN General Assembly  
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14. (C) The Ambassador welcomed Moussa's public, positive remarks on the subject of agreeing to an international definition of terrorism in line with the UN Secretary General's proposal, and called for his continued efforts to propel Arab states to accept a similar position. Moussa confirmed his strong conviction that terrorism was "a plague" that harms civilians. Civilians, he added, no matter their nationality, race, or creed, must be protected. This position reflected his own strong, personal convictions on the matter. He would continue his efforts to convince Arab ministers and leaders to adopt a similar view, regardless of some resistance from certain quarters.

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Peace Process, Magen David Adom Issue  
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15. (C) Moussa agreed with the Ambassador that all parties needed to seize the momentum created by disengagement and maintain further progress on the Roadmap. However, expanding Arab diplomatic and commercial ties with Israel, as the Ambassador also called for, would be "rewarding Israel for what it should have done long ago." The Arab states and the League will be forthcoming in our efforts to assist the Palestinians, he said, but "don't expect us to stand up and salute Israel for departing Gaza." We still need to see, he continued, what Israel will do with its West Bank settlements and its security wall; "both of which are being expanded, while we sit and speak." The question of how the settlements issue is addressed will affect everything else, he said.

16. (C) The Ambassador urged Moussa not to stand in the way of Swiss efforts to convene a diplomatic conference on the Third Protocol and to bring Israel's Magen David Adom society into the Red Cross/Crescent movement. Moussa said no, "Israel has already been paid a high price for Gaza disengagement. It doesn't deserve any more." Moussa said he would reconsider the issue in six months, to allow time to see how Israel reacts in dealing with West Bank settlements, Jerusalem, the barrier, and the Fourth Geneva Convention. The Ambassador countered that this was a humanitarian issue and should not be viewed through the prism of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Moussa said the Organization of Islamic Conferences (OIC) had already taken a clear position on the issue.

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Sustaining Momentum on Regional Reform  
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17. (C) Noting the strong impact that elections in Egypt and elsewhere in the region were having, the Ambassador requested Moussa to continue his efforts to push the regional and Arab League reform agenda, including recognition and support for the planned November Forum for the Future meeting in Manama. Moussa revealed interest in continuing the discussion on reform, suggesting that he and the Ambassador meet at a later time to discuss the issue in greater detail.

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DCM With MFA Cabinet Chief of Staff  
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18. (C) Also on September 6, the DCM delivered reftel demarche to MFA Chief of Cabinet Wafa'a Bassim, who was accompanied by Cabinet staffers Alaa Hadidi and Mohamed Aboukheir. Bassim, newly arrived from her previous position as Ambassador to Bucharest, was not up to speed on the substance of the Arab League agenda, but promised to convey the U.S. demarche to the Minister and other appropriate GOE officials. After thanking Egypt for its offer of hurricane relief assistance (septel), the Charge called for GOE support at the upcoming Arab League ministerial to make progress on key topics spelled out in reftel. Bassim noted that the subject of condemning terrorism was on the meeting agenda for the first time in League history. On Iraq, Bassim said Egypt was taking a "wait and see" approach on the issue of the constitution and resending an Ambassador to Baghdad. On all other issues, Bassim "took note" of U.S. positions but had no substantive response.

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